

Barth-Bonhoeffer legacy to be examined at St. Paul conference July 24-26

"Christ the Center" is the theme of a theological conference devoted to the legacy of Barth and Bonhoeffer for today being held this summer at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sponsored by the ELCA Institute for Mission in the USA and several other organizations including the Karl Barth Society and the Bonhoeffer Society, the conference will feature the following presenters: Clifford Green, Katherine Sonderegger, Lois Malcolm, William Werpehowski, Josiah Ulysses Young III, Martin Rumscheidt, John Webster, and George Hunsinger. Conference preachers will be John Matthews and Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger. The conference begins on Monday afternoon, July 24, and concludes with lunch on Wednesday, July 26. A copy of the conference brochure is included with this issue of the Newsletter.

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE KARL BARTH SOCIETY

All who are interested are invited to join the Karl Barth Society of North America.

To become a member of the Barth Society, send your name, address, and annual dues of \$15.00 (\$10.00 for students) to:

Professor Russell Palmer
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182-0265

Checks (drawn on a U. S. bank) should be made payable to "Karl Barth Society." Members whose dues were last paid prior to June of last year are encouraged to send in their annual renewal.

New book treats Barth-Bonhoeffer relationship

A recent study of the relationship of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Karl Barth by Andreas Pangritz, professor of systematic theology at the University of Aachen, has just appeared in English translation. The book, entitled *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* and published by Eerdmans, discusses the place of Barth in Bonhoeffer's development and then analyzes the significance of the famous remark about Barth's "positivism of revelation" in the prison letters. In his translator's foreword, Martin Rumscheidt comments that Pangritz "opens a new round of discussion with his well-argued, ground-breaking, and provocative thesis." A review will appear in the next issue of this Newsletter.

Charlotte von Kirschbaum featured at KBSNA program at 1999 AAR/SBL in Boston

Discussion of the significance of Charlotte von Kirschbaum highlighted the KBSNA program at the Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL in Boston last November.

The first session on Friday afternoon began with a presentation by Eberhard Busch (University of Göttingen) on "Charlotte von Kirschbaum, the Collaborator." The second speaker was Douglas Farrow (McGill University). His topic was "Karl Barth on Christ's Ascension." A revised version of this paper is to appear in a special Barth issue of *The International Journal of Systematic Theology* (July 2000).

On Saturday morning there was a discussion of Suzanne Selinger's recent book *Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth*. Prof. Selinger's comments on what she intended to do when she began work on the book and some of the unexpected things that emerged as she got further into it were followed by two appraisals—from Katherine Sonderegger (Middlebury College) and William Werpehowski (Villanova University).

Plans are underway for this year's KBSNA sessions in connection with the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting which is set for November 18-21, 2000 in Nashville. As usual, the Barth Society program will be scheduled just prior to the Annual Meeting—on Friday afternoon, November 17, and Saturday morning, November 18.

Douglas Farrow on the Ascension

Douglas Farrow (McGill University) presented a paper entitled "Karl Barth on Christ's Ascension" at the KBSNA meeting last November in Boston. As a continuation of that discussion, Paul Molnar offers the following review of Prof. Farrow's recent book on the ascension:

Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology. By Douglas Farrow. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pp. vii-340. \$35.00 cloth.

In this beautifully written, challenging, informative, tenaciously argued, meticulously documented and provocative book, Douglas Farrow interprets the ascension as the key to a "eucharistic ecclesiology" that allows for the fact that the "eucharist grounds the church" rather than that the "church grounds the eucharist."

This book shifts the weight of the NT witness from the resurrection to the ascension with a view toward stressing, with Irenaeus, that Jesus humanly descended and ascended (as the exalted man) and that it is the Holy Spirit who unites us (eucharistically) to the Father now. It is important to see that Jesus really is absent (because ascended) and that his presence is not some generally recognizable presence but the presence of the man Jesus; otherwise the church runs the risk (well-documented and superbly criticized) of triumphalism, institutionalism, and individualism, and perhaps even militarism and mysticism, because it will inevitably try to look through or beyond Jesus' humanity to find his divinity, thus embracing some form of docetism in the end.

Indeed, when Jesus' humanity is not sufficiently in view, the church has consistently attempted to substitute itself for Jesus in various ways such as through natural theology or an independent mariology that vies with Jesus in its attempt to mediate the one mediator. Farrow believes that people today stumble more over Jesus' humanity than his divinity, and that this contemporary stumbling can be traced from a line of dualistic thought espoused in varying degrees by the Gnostics, Origen, Augustine, Denys the Areopagite, Maximus, Bernard of Clairvaux, Joachim of Fiore, Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Sittler, Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, and Juan Luis Segundo right down to those he relies on to construct his own thesis.

Though Farrow relies on Irenaeus for his constructive proposal, even Irenaeus does not come through totally unscathed. Much value is also found in Kierkegaard's theology, despite its tendency toward individualism. The chief modern figures that contribute to Farrow's constructive position are Karl Barth and Thomas F. Torrance. Both Barth and Torrance are praised for seeing that Jesus' humanity is

in fact established in, by, and through the ascension. We are told however that Barth overcorrects Kierkegaard who had suggested that contemporaneity with Jesus is something we must achieve, and that Torrance slips a little with his attempt to speak directly of Jesus as God.

Barth is roundly criticized for having spoken the name of Jesus so loudly that other names cannot even be heard. Thus it is claimed that Barth falls into a type of christomonism; that he confuses soteriology and ontology; that there is in his theology the suspicion of docetism (and for good reason according to Farrow); that Barth seals the historical Jesus in eternity with his doctrine of election; that Barth's erroneous view of the sacraments as ethical acts stems from Origenist leanings that do not just appear later in his theology; that Barth is even guilty of idolatry; and that in the end a residue of natural theology leads to a view of time and eternity that is mutually defining.

There is no doubt that this book makes a monumental contribution to contemporary systematic theological discussion of Christology and Ecclesiology. Farrow displays an extraordinary ability to digest complex issues, assess them, and then present his own views with clarity and consistency. He is certainly a first-rate systematic thinker and above all someone who insists on putting Christ at the center of his reflections. In an age when many theologians wittingly and unwittingly substitute various ideologies for the living Jesus Christ, this book is a breath of fresh air. Any serious theologian will certainly want to read this book; it is a book that most definitely will affect all future discussions of the ascension and its implications for ecclesiology.

With all due respect for the great achievement of this work, however, I was still left with a number of significant puzzling questions.

First, does Farrow place so much weight on the doctrine of the ascension that he runs the risk of underplaying election, trinity, creation, incarnation, or the resurrection? For instance in his analysis of Acts 2 we are told that the main theme of Peter's speech is the ascension and not the resurrection, whereas it seems plain to me that Peter indeed cites the resurrection as central. Further, Farrow repeatedly refers the reader to "Jesus-history," i.e., "the sanctification of our humanity through the life and passion and heavenly intercession of Jesus" (6), as his theological criterion. But noticeably missing here and elsewhere is any notion of Christ's active Lordship, namely, of his ability, as the Word incarnate, to interact with us now through the power of the Holy Spirit. Also absent is the idea that the Word is the subject of the event of incarnation.

After arguing that Thomas F. Torrance helped to get the story of Jesus moving again so as to make "Barth's revolution complete" Farrow insists that ascension refers to the triumph of a "particular man...

It is to that vision [of a new creation] that the doctrine of ascension in the flesh leads," (265-66). But if it is the risen and ascended Lord himself who determines the validity of what is thought and said here, how can Farrow appeal to a *vision* of a new creation? Does that not displace the living Christ? Is that displacement not compounded by his search for a "eucharistic world-view" (73, 88) and for a "world-view based on Jesus-history" (129)? Wasn't Barth right to observe that *all* world-views represent human attempts to avoid the Lordship of Jesus Christ (IV/3, 254ff.)? We are told, e.g., that Irenaeus allowed "Jesus-history" to shape his view of creation (59). But the question remains: is it "Jesus-history" or Jesus himself coming again who does that?

Second, Farrow praises Barth for his apparent thoroughgoing rejection of a *logos asarkos*. But here it seems he has not read Barth as carefully as he might have. For Barth argued that this was a necessary and important construct of trinitarian theology that acknowledges God's freedom *in se* and *ad extra*. Farrow wrestles with this topic in Appendix B, concluding that there were two types of pre-existence attested in the NT, i.e., Jesus' pre-existence as a man and as God. His analysis here is very instructive. He stresses the importance of the immanent Trinity but refuses to acknowledge that there ever in fact was a *logos asarkos*. Referring to John's Gospel, Farrow contends "That he [Jesus] goes [ascends] makes him the way [to the Father]," (36). But wasn't Jesus the way, the truth, and the life precisely because, as Son, he was eternally *homoousion* with the Father from the beginning? Do we not have to say that just as God was always Father, though not always creator, so the triune God did in fact exist before the world in his eternal freedom? Jesus' humanity is eternally within God in virtue of the ascension. But can we conclude from that fact that his humanity pre-existed, except in the sense that he did exist in God's eternal election? Has Farrow not confused election and execution of God's gracious will in this thinking?

Farrow quite rightly attacks a false notion of a *logos asarkos* that would imply a God behind the God revealed in Jesus Christ. But one may ask whether Farrow's belief in Jesus' human pre-existence takes due cognizance of the need to distinguish the immanent and economic Trinity and of election as a free act of grace (as Barth did, cf. IV/3, 483f.). Further, one may wonder whether or not Farrow's own understanding of "Jesus-history" does not itself tend toward the docetism he thinks he finds in Barth with the idea that Jesus humanly pre-existed his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. How can Jesus truly share our humanity if his is a humanity that pre-existed his birth on earth, even if this is only understood retroactively (297)?

Third, just because of his failure to distinguish

clearly the immanent and economic Trinity, Farrow criticizes Thomas F. Torrance's alleged lack of attention to the Spirit with respect to the ascension saying: "To look beyond Jesus' humanity to the operation of his divinity in order to explain his 'towering authority' over the world is a move that runs counter to everything we have been saying. We must look instead to the Spirit..." (266). What Torrance stressed in the passages cited by Farrow was the so-called Extra-Calvinisticum and the fact that in the incarnate life of the Mediator, God was not transformed into a man. Thus, the ultimate meaning of Jesus' human activity, even as the ascended Lord, is indeed to be found in his eternal Sonship since in him God's being and act are one. In my view Torrance was not looking beyond Jesus' humanity, but was recognizing that his humanity was the humanity of the eternal Son of God.

More important, however, is the fact that Farrow's suggestion appears to me to separate the Word and Spirit at just the point where they ought to be seen to be working as one. We don't look to the Spirit *instead* of the Word, but by looking to the Spirit we hope to be enlightened by the Word through sharing in his new humanity. In Farrow's view "it is only by means of the Spirit...that this human work of filling and fulfilling, satisfying and perfecting, is achieved," (267). Why *only* by the Spirit? Can we separate the Spirit from the Word at this important point without falling into some form of docetism or adoptionism? Barth and Torrance clearly distinguished the immanent and economic Trinity in order to avoid such a conclusion.

Fourth, the relation of time and eternity. We do not have space here to discuss at length Farrow's extensive critique of Barth's theology. But it does boil down to the idea that Barth allows his preconception of time to define God's eternity as simultaneity. In Farrow's opinion Barth allows time to be swallowed up by eternity and thus they are "defined by their opposition to one another," (246) just as Barth thinks of Jesus' uniqueness by opposing divinity and humanity. This makes it difficult for Barth to distinguish between election and resurrection. Indeed "Jesus' resurrection begins to look rather like a shift from inauthentic human temporality to authentic divine temporality" (288). What is one to make of this?

Is it possible that this critique is dictated by Farrow's wish to make "Jesus-history primary" (264)? Could this be why one rarely sees the word faith in this book? Could this be why Farrow thinks the eucharist grounds the church while Barth insisted that only Christ himself could be that ground? Granted, Barth's later view of the sacrament underplayed Christ's high-priestly mediation. But does that stem from Barth's doctrine of God, as Farrow insists, or from a later inconsistency with his doctrine of God?

Perhaps it is no accident that Farrow thinks that *C.D. IV* is the greatest of Barth's achievements while Thomas F. Torrance thinks that *C.D. II* is. In any case, Barth is accused of making the church a second incarnation. But in fact Barth was extremely clear that there could be no second incarnation because the church, as the earthly historical form of its heavenly head, lives by grace and faith alone. Remember, "Jesus-history" is defined without specific reference to Christ's deity, which only faith can recognize and which Torrance held was "the supreme truth of the Gospel, the key to the bewildering enigma of Jesus..." (*The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996, 46). It thus seems clear that any priority of the Word, even in the incarnation but also in election, resurrection, and ascension, has been supplanted by an emphasis on history. Hence the Word really becomes a way of speaking of "Jesus-history" rather than of an act of God which is inseparable from his being *in se* and *ad extra* and which can be recognized only in faith. Farrow's argument that Barth fell into christomonism is particularly unconvincing in light of Barth's discussion of vocation. If Farrow had paid more attention to what George Hunsinger termed Barth's "dialectical inclusion," he might have seen that Barth was not opposing time and eternity and divinity and humanity in Christ. Rather, he was trying to understand their relation as freely constituted by grace in eternity and in time.

Interestingly, Farrow interprets the "He came down from heaven" and the fact that Jesus pre-existed as God as "ways of saying that the fact that the Father has a Son, and the Son a Father, is not a fact contingent upon the creation...both are ways of acknowledging the divine otherness and freedom of the one who gives himself, and is given to us, as a man," (282). Yet the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed does stress that, as Son, Jesus is begotten "before all ages." Must that not imply a divine pre-existence prior to and apart from created space and time?

Even if God is not "spaceless" or "timeless" because in him space and time have their own unique divine nature, the fact must remain that in God, time is not defined by the mutual opposition of past, present, and future simply because created time does not define or determine divine time. That is Barth's view of God's pre-temporal, supra-temporal, and post-temporal existence. In God none can be set against the others because God is simultaneously one and three as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hence Barth's concept of simultaneity is not achieved by playing time off against eternity. Rather it is dictated by the eternal coinherence of the Father, Son, and Spirit, which in fact says more than that God is other than creation. It says that God precedes creation so that there really was a *logos asarkos*, even though now in light of the

incarnation, reconciliation, resurrection, and ascension there is in fact no such *logos asarkos*, since Christ exists now eternally as God and man, our Mediator. It says that, as there is no opposition between the Father, Son and Spirit in eternity, so it is the case that such opposition, which is indeed part of created time, is overcome and resolved on our behalf in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

For Barth, death is both part of our natural existence (as Hans Walter Wolff points out [*Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974, 115ff.]) and our natural existence is also marked by sin, so that death is also seen as the wages of sin. In Farrow's view, Barth believes that sin (the fall) is necessary (296). But the truth is that Barth saw sin as a factual necessity grounded in the inexplicable fact that men and women actually did sin and do actually sin and not in any ontological or logical necessity.

There should be no opposition between election and salvation here. While God did not create in order to save, why could it not be the case that, in his eternal election of grace, the God who in fact created through his Word and in his Spirit had already made provision for the fact that creation would fall and need salvation? Obviously this can only be explained by us retrospectively, but that does not mean that election has become deterministic or universalist since, for Barth, election is God's continuing exercise of his freedom manifested in the history of Christ. Because Farrow explains Jesus' human pre-existence as "fully a feature of our world only retroactively, by recapitulation" (297) he is led to conclude that the ordering of creation or its reordering "is visible to us only as the mystery of the church, which is the witness to Jesus' ascension" (297). Is he not in danger of allowing the church to displace the living Christ precisely at this point? Is that why he believes that "Jesus' personal identity...is also constituted by his union with the church..." (269)? For Barth "The fact that God has bound Himself and undertaken to establish and preserve His Church in Christ is...not a reversible sentence. It must not be misused to make the Church itself, as the object of God's eternal election, the *telos* of His will, and therefore a moment in His eternity," (II/1, 619).

I will just mention one further point. Barth frequently referred to Matthew's text "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," to reinforce the fact that Christ's continued presence through the power of the Holy Spirit is precisely the factor upon which we must rely as we live now between the time of his first and second coming. No world-view could compensate for the need to rely on Christ's own presence and personal judgment on what is said and done in the Church. Indeed the Church itself is three-dimensional for Barth so that its true being is hidden

with Christ in God and can be seen and understood only in faith. Farrow's emphasis on "Jesus-history" and then his emphasis on the idea that the reordering of creation is visible only as the mystery of the church which witnesses to Christ's ascension seems to me to undercut the need and call for faith in the sense that Barth properly stressed in the *C.D.* (cf., e.g., IV/1, 654ff.).

PAUL D. MOLNAR
St. John's University
Jamaica, New York

Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth

Suzanne Selinger's book on the Barth-von Kirschbaum relationship (*Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth: A Study in Biography and the History of Theology*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998) was the subject of discussion at the KBSNA meeting last November in Boston. As a follow-up to that discussion, George Hunsinger offers the following comments on the subject of Prof. Selinger's book:

When Charlotte von Kirschbaum first heard Karl Barth lecture in 1924, she was 24 years old, financially almost destitute, and in poor health. Deeply religious and a voracious reader with a keen interest in theology, she had already devoured Barth's 1919 *Römerbrief*, at the recommendation of her pastor, shortly after it had appeared, and then avidly kept up with Barth's work through the journal *Zwischen den Zeiten*.

At a time when only a tiny fraction of the general population, virtually all male, went on for a university education, she had been trained for a career as a *Krankenschwester* or Protestant nurse. It was George Merz, her pastor, who first recognized her intellectual gifts. After guiding her through confirmation in the Lutheran church, Merz included her in the intellectual circle he had gathered around him in Munich, which included Thomas Mann. It was also Merz, by then editor of *Zwischen den Zeiten* and godfather to one of Barth's children, who had taken her with him to that lecture, and who introduced her to Barth afterwards. Barth invited them both for a visit to his summer retreat, the Bergli, in the mountains overlooking Lake Zurich.

Merz and von Kirschbaum went to the Bergli that summer and returned the next. Von Kirschbaum made a very good impression. She was drawn into the circle of theological friends who spent their summers at the chalet. Pastor Eduard Thurneysen, Barth's closest friend, and Gerty Pestalozzi, owner with her husband

of the Bergli, took an interest in furthering her education. (Becoming a *Krankenschwester* had required no special academic training or higher degrees.) Ruedi Pestalozzi, Gerty's husband and a wealthy businessman, paid for her to receive secretarial training, after which she became a welfare officer at Siemans, a large electronics firm in Nuremberg.

In October 1925 Barth switched university teaching appointments from Göttingen to Münster. His wife and family remained behind until a suitable residence could be found. In February 1926 von Kirschbaum visited Barth for a month in Münster, shortly before his family was to join him, but while he was still living alone.

Barth's situation at this time is worth noting. He was 39 years old, had been married to Nelly (then aged 32) for nearly 13 years, and had five young children. The marriage, not a particularly happy one, had by his own account left him feeling resigned to loneliness. After his parents had prevented him in 1910 from marrying Rösy Mürger, whom he deeply loved and never forgot—and who died in 1925—he had submitted in 1911 to an engagement and then in 1913 to a marriage, with Nelly, that had in essence been arranged by his mother. (Barth always carried a photograph of Rösy with him for the rest of his life, sometimes wept when looking at it, and would continue over the years to visit her grave.)

Although we do not know exactly what happened between Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum in that fateful encounter of 1926, we do know that from that point on they were in love with each other, that Barth immediately gave her manuscript after manuscript for advice and correction, and that she committed herself henceforth to doing everything she possibly could to advance his theological work.

After spending a sabbatical at the Bergli in the summer term of 1929, with von Kirschbaum at his side as his aide, Barth announced in October that she would be moving into the family household to be a member of it. This arrangement—convoluted, extremely painful for all concerned, yet not without integrity and joys—lasted for nearly 35 years until 1964 when von Kirschbaum had to be admitted to a nursing home with Alzheimer's disease. These were exactly the years of Barth's most productive intellectual life. As his unique student, critic, researcher, advisor, collaborator, companion, assistant, spokesperson, and confidant, Charlotte von Kirschbaum was indispensable to him. He could not have been what he was, or have done what he did, without her.

The reverse would also seem to have been true. Von Kirschbaum was a strong, noble, and unconventional woman who made her own choices and willingly bore their great costs. The costs of the

arrangement with Barth were many, not least a total rejection by most of her own family, and a thousand constant humiliations from church, society, and the larger Barth clan (not excluding Barth's mother, who eventually tempered her harsh disapproval). Many real exits opened up along the way (such as a proposal of marriage from the philosopher Heinrich Scholz), but she never took any of them. What she once wrote in particular to a friend would seem to hold true of her whole life: "It is very clear to me that Karl had to act in this way, and that comforts me whatever the consequences." From her first encounter with his theology in her youth to the very end of her life, she felt gripped by a sense of the greatness of Barth's contribution, an excitement that she once described simply with the words, "This is it!" During one of Barth's last visits to her in the nursing home, she said, "We had some good times together, didn't we?"

We may well wonder also where Nelly Barth was in the midst of all this. There is undoubtedly much we will never know. But we do know that in her own way she never ceased to believe in her husband and his work. We know that the two of them experienced a reconciliation after Charlotte departed the household, that she and Karl both visited her at the nursing home on Sundays, that she continued those visits after Karl died in 1968, and that when Charlotte herself died in 1975, Nelly honored Karl's wishes by having Charlotte buried in the Barth family grave. Nelly herself died in 1976. Visitors to the Basel Hörnli cemetery today can see the names of all three together engraved one by one on the same stone.

The book by Suzanne Selinger is not the first to cover this territory, nor will it be the last. As a study in the history of theology, it succeeds reasonably well. The sections on how Barth and von Kirschbaum respectively viewed male/female relationships as bearing the image of God are interesting and worth reading.

As a biographical study, however, the book seems less successful. The author seethes with so much *ressentiment* toward Karl Barth that as I closed the book I had an image of him as St. Sebastian. At the level of adjectives, he takes a lot of hits. Unfortunately, Charlotte von Kirschbaum fares little better. The author unwittingly undermines her purposes of sympathy and compassion—unless one can persuade oneself that it is not demeaning to scorn the life that Charlotte von Kirschbaum actually chose for herself and openly affirmed, as opposed to one that could not have been and never was.

GEORGE HUNSINGER
Princeton Theological Seminary

Eberhard Busch on "Charlotte von Kirschbaum, the collaborator"

Eberhard Busch, best known as Karl Barth's biographer, provided his reflections on "Charlotte von Kirschbaum, the Collaborator" at the Barth Society program in Boston last November, explaining that the use of the word "collaborator" was meant to emphasize that she was far more than simply Barth's secretary or assistant.

First Busch shared some of his own reminiscences, sketching a vivid picture of von Kirschbaum's pastoral role with Barth's students. Upon his arrival in 1959 he met von Kirschbaum and noticed that she was always with Barth—in lectures, seminars, and other gatherings. "Later he told me that he couldn't speak unless she was nearby."

Busch was struck by the degree to which Barth (unlike the typical German professor) socialized with his students, and attributed this to von Kirschbaum's influence. "She remembered the former students exactly, as well as the present ones. Soon she knew the circumstances of their life and knew who needed now an encouragement, now concrete advice or help. Sometimes she gave me a banknote, or a new book, or medicine when I was in ill health."

He continued: "When in 1965 she went to a nursing home...I had the opportunity to do some parts of her former work. By this I got from a distance an impression of what once she done far more, when Barth himself stood at the zenith of his activity."

Busch recalled his own experiences of working with Barth as his assistant, giving us this picture of Barth's daily routine: "At the outset of my work with him he still was full of energy. He worked from morning till night, before organizing the evenings to end with the reading of poems together, with discussions on current questions of public life and with listening to music, until then in the hours after midnight in bed he devoured a lot of books: Shakespeare, Goethe, Kafka or about the Civil War. He needed only little sleep. Because early in the morning he phoned to me: 'Where are you? Work goes on!' And then we worked pretty hard the whole day long, interrupted by happily relaxed times for the meals. Visitors were welcomed, lectures and discussions were prepared, articles were written and dictated, books were read, and it was my turn to make extracts from them for his use. And many letters were written and sometimes they were made fully by me, but signed by him. He said that this method is sanctioned by Holy Scripture (i.e. by the pseudepigraphic writings)."

Busch was involved in a similar way in the preparation of the last volume of the *Dogmatics*. "One day he handed over his manuscript to me and said: 'Read it very exactly and make improvements and additions, wherever you think it might be helpful.' At the end I had written some pages, imitating his style, but he didn't want to see them, saying: 'I presume that the additions are suitable also without my supervision. And besides, future generations want to have

a task in discovering where another voice is speaking here.' In short, I learned by this in a very rough outline some of what of von Kirschbaum had done."

Busch provided this description of Barth's regular visits to the nursing home: "Because she could not talk anymore and conversation became impossible, he concentrated on singing songs for her... Once I was present when he sang the hymn to her: 'Now Thank We All Our God.' She tried to guess the forgotten words from his lips and to hum a little with him: 'So may this bounteous God/ through all our life be near us,/ with ever joyful hearts/ and blessed peace to cheer us;/ and keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplexed,/ and free us from all ills/ in this world and the next.' When he had finished, he pounded the table and said: 'Lollo, this is really true, isn't it?' And she nodded as if she were in full agreement."

In discussing the question of von Kirschbaum's involvement in Barth's work, Busch expressed his dissent from the opinion that von Kirschbaum was exploited by Barth. He quoted one of her closest friends, Dr. Lili Simon, "who thought it would be unjust to understand von Kirschbaum's life in terms of the title 'Working in the Shadow.' She said that Charlotte herself would have declared that her life was founded on her decision to live and to work rather in the light, and that for her a different decision would have meant to exist in the shadow. For the sake of this decision, which she never regretted, she accepted many disadvantages. She thought that in the work of Barth, something was happening that was decisive for theology, for the church, and for public life, and she wished to take part in it, as closely as possible." Busch commented: "This was the decision of von Kirschbaum, according to L. Simon, and I think that she was right. This point is important in order to assess the question, whether von Kirschbaum was exploited by Barth, as it is assumed sometimes... Exploitation is where a human life is put to an unintended use, so that someone cannot longer affirm his or her own life sincerely. I do not see that this was the situation of von Kirschbaum."

Busch reported on von Kirschbaum's involvement in the German church struggle in 1933-34. Amidst the turmoil of those days, when Barth, in addition to his teaching, was caught up in strenuous activity, von Kirschbaum played an important role of her own. In addition to participating in discussions "for nights on end" and circulating documents, she personally took a courageous stand. A Bavarian Lutheran herself, she became involved in a conflict with Georg Merz, the editor of the magazine of the dialectical theology *Zwischen den Zeiten*, who had been her spiritual mentor, who had originally won her heart for Christian theology. Now it grieved her to see that he "in all concrete questions (like the relation to the Jews)" was too affirming of the Nazi government. "Therefore she visited him, in order to call back her first theological teacher from his wrong track. But in vain!"

As the Nazi regime pursued its critics, von Kirschbaum was affected as well as Barth. One day the authorities

seized a text written by her about statements Barth made in October 1933 in Berlin concerning the injustice of the Nazi Reich and its discrimination against the Jews, declaring that a church tied to the word of God cannot be silent with regard to that. According to Busch, it was the content of this text that led to Barth's expulsion from Germany and to her emigration to Switzerland.

After 1935, von Kirschbaum was in an awkward position. She was in Switzerland with a German passport and permission for her to remain had to be renewed continually, which was complicated, since Barth had become an offense for the Swiss authorities, because he accused them of accommodating to Germany under Hitler.

"Even worse than that, in 1941, as part of the German attempt to silence the critic Barth, under threat of reprisals against her family in Munich she was pressed by the German authorities to leave her work with Barth and to return to Germany. She had the courage to resist that pressure."

But that was not her only conflict at that time. She, as a German, did not entirely identify with Barth's attitude toward Germany. Since the fall of 1938 he publicly declared that the churches were obliged to urge upon non-German governments the necessity of military resistance against the antisemitic and therefore godless and inhuman Germany. While von Kirschbaum agreed with that, she was afraid that it might be misinterpreted as general anti-German warmongering, which could make the life of the hidden but upright supporters of the Confessing Church in Germany far more difficult. According to Busch, it may have been because of von Kirschbaum's objection that Barth then clarified the point that the necessary opposition against Hitler's Germany is also a fight in favor of the Germans.

On the other hand, it was she who in 1942 wrote to Bonhoeffer the reasonable criticism of the mentality of the German conspirators that their nation, lost in nationalism, cannot be rescued "from further 'nationalistic' enterprises."

Busch related that when Barth in 1935 was appointed by the government of the canton Basel as commissioner of refugees, it was von Kirschbaum who to a large extent took this duty upon her. In 1938 was established the Swiss Evangelical Relief Organization for the Confessing Church in Germany. "In the direction of its welfare institution she was in charge of the oppressed members of the Confessing Church, and after the expulsion of the Jews from Austria, then also from Germany more and more of Christian-Jewish and Jewish refugees, working together with the Swiss Jewish refugee organization. She accompanied many of those so-called non-Aryans and remained in touch with them after their emigration to other countries."

Busch gave the following example: "One of those refugees was a lawyer, Kurt Müller, who had defended Jews and socialists and therefore was put in jail. He became converted by the Barmen Declaration and, because he could no longer practice his profession, he began to study theology. Since he was ill, he was able to study in Basel until 1942 and became... a good friend of Charlotte. Though

he could have emigrated to England, he returned consciously to Germany and set up in Stuttgart a very secret organization in order to hide Jews, so that in the end some hundreds of them survived. It is certain that in this time he was in touch with Barth's house very secretly. It is certain too that at the same time he had relations to a circle in Munich to which belonged longstanding friends of von Kirschbaum. A member of this circle was the publisher Claassen, who because of his Swiss passport had the opportunity to travel to Basel in order to get information or instructions. With the support of Kurt Müller and using formulations of Barth, in this circle was written the strongest Christian protest against the holocaust in Germany of this time. Helmut Hesse, who read out this text publicly, was killed in Dachau. It is to be assumed that it was von Kirschbaum who kept a tight grip on these conspiratorial activities."

Von Kirschbaum was also involved with the committee "Free Germany" in 1944-45, a movement in which German emigrants in Switzerland planned the spiritual and political renewal of Germany after the war. To it belonged distinguished persons who had been expelled from Germany for political or racial reasons, also Communists and social democrats. Von Kirschbaum counted herself among the emigrants. Barth was impressed at the way she had become "a public personality, who has diplomatic talks with heads of government and other authorities, who makes speeches as representative of the Confessing Church up and down the country..., who plays an important and respected part in the managing committee of that movement, even as a member of the presidency." And he acknowledged, "I myself only now see her talents, which went to waste so long."

Beyond this account of von Kirschbaum's activities during the Nazi era, Busch also commented on her writings on the place of women in the church: "It is remarkable, that she, who went such an extraordinary way as woman, in an extraordinary way emerged also as theological teacher, showing herself in her contributions about 'the evangelical doctrine of woman' and about women's ministry in the proclamation of the Word to be skilled in old and new exegetics, dogmatics, and up-to-date women's literature."

Concerning her views on these issues, Busch noted: "They are not essentially other than Barth's thoughts on this subject. We have to assume that they drew them up together, so that in this process Barth learned from her, but she from him too." From Amsterdam during the 1948 World Council of Churches meeting he wrote to her that he had fought in the committee on women and the church "with my/your wisdom." Busch pointed out that she quoted passages of Barth's Dogmatics in her lectures, while in his section on man and woman in volume KD III/4 he referred to what she had written. When a male theologian opposed women's equality, Barth contradicted him, declaring that he fully agreed with von Kirschbaum in this matter.

Busch summarized von Kirschbaum's teaching on an "evangelical" (i.e. according to the gospel) understanding of woman as an attempt to be guided by the affirmations of the Barmen Declaration, as an answer to Jesus Christ as the one Word of God, as witnessed to in Scripture. As von Kirschbaum put it: "Where men and women bear mutual

witness to that in the reality of their existence, they stand in the genuine complementarity that no longer admits of either inauthentic domination or inauthentic subjection." She was determined not to read into Scripture a preconceived view of these issues, but according to Busch "she reads the Bible with the desire to find in it the appropriate orientation in the whole controversial question, without avoiding to read again and anew, that is in the light of 'the one word,' the stubborn passages, which seem to support a criticism of a women's free existence."

Disruptive Grace

George Hunsinger has just published a collection of studies in the theology of Karl Barth under the title *Disruptive Grace* (Eerdmans). The book contains 15 essays on various aspects of Barth's thought. It includes a number of papers given at conferences (the appearance of which in print will be welcomed by those who heard the original presentations) as well as some previously published articles and some other pieces, arranged according to three broad themes: political theology (e.g. contemporary issues of peace and social justice), doctrinal theology (such dogmatic concerns as Christology and the Trinity), and ecumenical theology. A review will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Barth Archiv Newsletter available on web

A note from Hans-Anton Drewes, Director of the Karl Barth Archives, announces that the second issue of its newsletter is now available on the internet at the following address: www.unibas.ch/theologie/BarthNewsletter99.html
#Contents

The issue contains the following articles:

- Dieter Zellweger, "Encouraging encounters with Karl Barth and Markus Barth at Princeton Theological Seminary."
- Dieter Zellweger, "New volumes of the Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe ahead: What we can expect."
- Karl Barth, Sermon on Luke 1:5-23, 1917, Introduction and Translation by Robert J. Sherman.
- Christoph Dahling-Sander, "Karl Barth - Emil Brunner. An uneasy correspondence from the very beginning."

Australian symposium published

The Australian Theological Forum has published *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* The volume contains the papers presented at a conference held at Queens College in the University of Melbourne in December 1998 to mark the 30th anniversary of Barth's death. John Webster (Oxford) contributes three essays: "Barth, Modernity, and Postmodernity," "The Grand Narrative of Jesus Christ: Barth's Christology," and "Rescuing the Subject: Barth and Postmodern Anthropology." Also included are 11 papers by Australian scholars. Information is available at the following e-mail address: hdregan@camtech.net.au

Address communications for the Newsletter to the editor: Russell W. Palmer, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, NE 68182-0265

e-mail: russellpalmer@home.com

Office telephone: (402) 554-3066

FAX: (402) 554-3296

Home telephone: (402) 558-9304